

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 105 338

CG 009 708

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TITLE A Preliminary Investigation of Three Diagnosticians' Interpretations of a Standard Life Style Analysis Protocol.
PUB DATE Apr 74
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Western Psychological Association (54th, San Francisco, California, April 25-28, 1974)
AVAILABLE FROM Counseling Center, Humboldt State University, Arcata, California 95521
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.76 HC-\$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Behavior; *Case Studies; Environmental Influences; Human Living; *Individual Psychology; *Interpretive Skills; *Life Style; Research Methodology; Speeches

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this investigation was to determine if three Adlerian interpreters could examine the same completed protocol and arrive at similar interpretations of the subject's life style based on the information contained in the protocol. Since the study was intended only as a preliminary investigation, no attempt was made to analyze the information statistically. An attempt was made to shed some light on the following questions: (1) to what extent can the diagnostician's interpretation of the subject's life style be based solely on information contained in the protocol itself? (2) how would a pooled consensual interpretation of all three diagnosticians compare to or differ from the original summary as stated by the author? (3) will any non-consensual or contradictory interpretations affect any one diagnostician's final life style summary? It was concluded that three Adlerian interpreters, operating independently, can arrive at very similar life style summaries based solely on the information contained in a completed protocol. Suggestions for further research are presented. (Author/BW)

A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF THREE DIAGNOSTICIAN'S
INTERPRETATIONS OF A STANDARD LIFE STYLE ANALYSIS PROTOCOL

by Terrence M. McCarthy, M.A.

The purpose of the present preliminary investigation was to determine if three Adlerian interpreters could examine the same completed protocol and arrive at similar interpretations of the subject's life style based only on the information contained in the protocol. (For a description of the standard protocol see Dreikurs, 1950). Two of the interpreters analyzed the protocol on a "blind" basis, while the present writer performed the actual life style analysis in the presence of the subject. All three analyses were done independently. Since the study was intended only as preliminary investigation, no attempt was made to analyze the information statistically. The present investigation was also an attempt to shed some light on the following questions.

1. To what extent can the diagnostician's interpretation of the subject's life style be based only on information contained in the protocol itself?
2. If the consensual interpretations of all three diagnosticians were pooled to form a statement of the subject's basic life style, how would this consensual summary compare to or differ from the original summary as stated by the present writer?
3. Will any non-consensual interpretations (i.e., interpretations made by only one diagnostician) or any contradictory interpretations affect any one diagnostician's final life style summary to the extent that

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there is little consensual agreement among all three final life style interpretations.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Two of the diagnosticians were presented with only the completed protocol and standardized instructions for stating interpretations. (The complete standardized instructions and data analysis is available from the author upon request.) The present writer also used the standardized instructions in this study for the purpose of comparison. The diagnosticians were instructed to review the completed protocol and complete five basic tasks, which consisted of:

1. Note what responses to the family constellation questionnaire were most helpful and note interpretations, which stem from that information.
2. Interpret each early recollection, state the general message of the early recollection, and then rewrite that message in the "first person."
3. Briefly state how each early recollection was interpreted.
4. Based on all early recollection interpretations, write a common theme summary. Rewrite this summary in the "first person."
5. Based on all information, write a final life style summary.

Each interpreter was allowed a maximum of 120 minutes to complete the entire task. Having each interpreter note which family

constellation questions were the most significant was intended as an aid in providing interpretive clues. The brief explanations of

how each early recollection was interpreted was an attempt to examine in detail the process of early recollection interpretation.

The purpose of stating the early recollection interpretations and the final life style summary in the "first person" is simply an aid to examining possible consensual interpretations, in that the language for interpretation statement is somewhat more delineated or limited when all three interpreters use the "first person" as a common form of statement.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

In order to categorize each interpreter's specific interpretation the following categories were established and labeled by number. The term "inferred" is used to denote that no attempt has been made to establish the validity or reliability of interpretations labeled "consensual."

1. Inferred Consensual Interpretation: This category represents a consensual interpretation made by all three interpreters to a specific response.
2. Inferred Double Interpreter Interpretation: Where two interpreters made essentially the same interpretation based on a specific response.
3. Single Interpreter Interpretation: A specific interpretation to a specific response, which was made by only one interpreter.
4. Consensual Omission: This category applies only to the family constellation questionnaire, and is applied to those questions that were not mentioned as being significant

by all three interpreters.

5. Contradictions in Interpretation: Where two or all three interpretations to a specific response represent contradictions in interpretation.

The following is an example of the application of the categorization process.

Protocol Responses

In response to Question #3 of the family constellation questionnaire, which asks, "What kind of kid were you?", Interpreter #1 notes as significant aspects of the client's response that he was always "rebellious and in trouble." Interpreter #2 notes the subject's selection of the "bad child role", and Interpreter #3 notes the subject's mention of "fighting." Category #1, Inferred Consensual Interpretation, is applied to these three interpretations because all three interpreters note aspects of misbehavior as representing significant information.

An example of Category #2, Inferred Double Interpreter Interpretation, is found in the subject's response to Question #1, which asks the subject to describe which sibling is most different from him. To this response, Interpreter #1 notes that the sister conformed, which is an indication that the subject rebelled. Interpreter #2 notes that the "sister was good", and indicates that he will look for "indications of the subject's selection of the bad child role." Both interpreters view the description of rebellion or misbehavior as significant information. Interpreter #3 did not interpret this particular response.

Categories #3 and #4 are straightforward, and do not require

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further explanation at this point. Category #5 represents contradictions in interpretation. An example of such contradictions is found in all three interpreters' responses to Question #1 under the sibling interrelationships section. The question asks, "Who took care of whom?" The subject's response is that he took care of his sister, but he qualifies this response with, "I'd like to think I did, but I really didn't." Interpreter #1 interpreted this to mean that the subject indicated a desire to show responsibility, but questioned his ability to carry through. Interpreter #2 stated that the subject wanted to appear good. Interpreter #3 interpreted the response to mean that the subject was domineering. In viewing these contradictions, the important question is whether or not they significantly affect the consensual agreement of all three interpreters' final life style summaries.

The cumulative total for the five categories, as applied to the entire family constellation questionnaire, is as follows:

Category #1 Inferred Consensual Interpretation - 5

Category #2 Inferred Double Interpreter Interpretation - 12

Category #3 Single Interpreter Interpretations - 22

Category #4 Consensual Omission - 10

Category #5 Contradictions in Interpretation - 2

Early Recollections

The second type of information, which is collected and interpreted in the life style analysis, represents the subject's early recollections. In this study, the interpreters were presented with five separate early recollections. For the purpose of example, one early recollection with all three interpretations is presented.

Early Recollection #4: "I was sitting on the steps of our neighbor's house playing with the neighbor boy. My mother was inside. For some reason another little boy came up calling me names and threw sand in my face, blinding me. It hurt awful. Mom took me home and tried to wash out the sand. I couldn't see for a while." (Feeling - "confusion, bewilderment, just not knowing.")

Interpreter #1 interprets this early recollection as follows: I believe that other people are going to hurt me for no apparent reason. I just don't know why other people want to hurt me. I feel others are unfair.

Interpreter #2 states: I am justified in being suspicious, look what people do to me for no reason. No one can blame me for putting others, society, etc., down.

Interpreter #3 states: I am perfectly able to play, cooperate with peers, but circumstances will not permit it. I get hurt. My "servant" mother was not there. Poor me. She tried, but did not do too well. If I don't know, I am confused and cannot be blamed. But I should know.

A partial example of how the three interpretations are analyzed and categorized is as follows:

There are two Inferred Consensual Interpretations. One stems from Interpreter #1's statement that "other people are going to hurt me," which means the same as Interpreter #2's statement of "look what people do to me," which is a direct reference to the activity content of the early recollection, which is "getting hurt." Interpreter #3's consensual statement is simply, "I get hurt."

In Category #2, there is one Inferred Double Interpreter.

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Interpretation, which stems from Interpreter #2's statement of "no one can blame me," which is similar in meaning to Interpreter #3's statement of, "If I don't know, I am confused and cannot be blamed."

Category #3 contains six Single Interpreter Interpretations. Examples are Interpreter #1's statement of "others are unfair," and Interpreter #2's statement of, "I am justified in being suspicious."

There are no apparent Contradictions in Interpretation to be placed in Category #5.

The standardized instruction, which instructed each interpreter to briefly state how each early recollection was interpreted, is basically an open-ended instruction, in that this writer did not assume that any or all interpreters would adhere to any specific method of early recollection interpretation. Gushurst (1971) has stated specifically the steps to be followed in the interpretation of early recollections. Even though none of the three interpreters in the present investigation were specifically trained in Gushurst's method, it is interesting to note that the present writer was able to identify each of Gushurst's three steps as contained in each interpreter's explanation of how Early Recollection #4 was interpreted.

The three interpreter's common theme summaries for the early recollections and the three interpreters' final life style summaries were also analyzed and categorized in the same manner as the individual early recollections and the family constellation questionnaire. The combined total for all five categories is as follows:

Category #1 Inferred Consensual Interpretations - 17

Category #2 Inferred Double Interpreter Interpretations - 36

Category #3 Single Interpreter Interpretation - 59

Category #4 Consensual Omission - 10

Category #5 Contradiction in Interpretation - 2

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Category #3, which contains interpretations made by only one interpreter, contains the highest number of interpretations. An examination of these interpretations indicates that they tend to reflect individual interpreter emphasis. Interpreter #1 was responsible for the majority of these interpretations, and as was mentioned previously, it was Interpreter #1 who performed the actual life style analysis in the presence of the subject. During the actual analysis, Interpreter #1 obtained "objective situation" information, which undoubtedly influenced his analysis. The "objective situation" information was not presented to Interpreter #2 and #3. Since these "single" interpretations do not represent contradictions in interpretation, they do not appear to significantly influence the consensuality of the final life style summaries.

Category #2, which contains interpretations agreed upon by two interpreters, contains the second highest number of interpretations.

Interpreter #1 and #2 are responsible for the majority of these interpretations, and this may be due to the fact that Interpreter #1 was trained by Interpreter #2.

Category #4 pertains only to the family constellation questionnaire and contains those items, which all three interpreters did not indicate as being significant. Some of these items are designed to provide information, which is relevant to the understanding of

sibling groupings in a larger family and is less appropriate in the present analysis where only two children are involved. Other questions, such as "Who had the best sense of humor," "Who was the most idealistic," and "the most materialistic," were simply not viewed as providing particularly significant information. There were only two apparent contradictions in interpretations, both of which stemmed from two questions on the family constellation questionnaire. The contradictions appear to reflect individual interpreter emphasis, do not reappear in the final life style summaries, and therefore, do not seem to affect the consensuality of the final life style summaries significantly. The present writer was unable to explain the specific reason for these contradictions, since he was not provided with each interpreter's specific theoretical rationale for why the interpretation was made. This is a result of the present study's limited design, and provides a fruitful suggestion for further and more indepth investigation.

The category with the least amount of entries is Category #1, which contains Consensual Interpretations by all three interpreters. Of these 17 entries, 12 result directly from the interpreted early recollections, the early recollections common theme summary, and the final life style summary. This result seems to indicate that early recollection interpretation may be more conducive to consensual agreement among interpreters than is the interpretation of family constellation information. The significance of the consensual interpretations resulting from the early recollections and the final life style summary is at least alluded to when all Consensual Interpretations and Double Interpreter Interpretations are combined

or pooled to form a consensual life style summary, which can then be compared with the original life style summary as constructed by the present writer. The following is the present writer's original summary of the subject's basic life style.

"I believe that no matter what I do, it's not going to be good enough to meet others' expectations and demands. It's important for me to receive recognition from others yet they never give me enough recognition. It's important for me to achieve and even though I had achievements as a child, other people didn't give me enough recognition, they just didn't appreciate how hard I tried. If I can't be the best at what they want then I'll be the best at rebelling and demonstrating irresponsibility because other people are unfair, they cause hurt, are deceitful, and take advantage. They are not appreciative and cannot be satisfied, especially women. They are responsible for my misfortune and misery in life."

The following "Consensual" life style summary is a composition of only those interpretations, which were categorized as Inferred Consensual Interpretations and Inferred Double Interpreter Interpretations. The consensual summary is as follows (Note: Words in parentheses added by this writer):

"Other people can't be trusted; they let me down and deceive me. I feel victimized by other people (and) they are responsible for my misfortune. I sometimes feel unable to solve life's problems, but I'm trying to be good and find the right answers. (However), no matter how hard I try, it is never good enough. (Therefore), I try, but get discouraged. How can I get close to people with all this against me."

I must be on guard, be careful, and keep my distance, (since) other people are a danger to me -- are out to get me (especially) when I don't understand the situation and feel that life is confusing. Others (are) and life (in general) is unfair.

I am justified in doing what I want to do (especially) lying and manipulating. I feel lonely, separate, and a failure, (since) I must do everything by myself; but question my ability to do so.

I still need support, pampering, still need to be the center of attention around someone like mom who never really gives me enough. It's important for me to receive recognition from others, yet they never give me enough recognition.

I can only belong, I will only be recognized or count, if I am the smartest and strongest, and if all, especially my mother, pay attention to me and submit to my wishes at all times. If I do not achieve this, it is the fault of others. I will get them to notice me then through misbehavior. It's important for me to achieve, and even though I had achievements as a child, other people didn't give me enough recognition; they just didn't appreciate how hard I tried. If I can't be the best at what they want then I'll be the best at rebelling and demonstrating irresponsibility."

It appears that the basic interpretations, which describe how the subject views himself, other people, and life in general are present in both the present writer's original summary and in the consensual life style summary.

CONCLUSION

If the interpretations categorized as being consensually agreed upon by all three interpreters, or by at least two interpreters, are assumed to represent consensual statements, it can be concluded that three separate Adlerian interpreters can arrive at very similar life style summaries based only on the information contained in the completed protocol. As was stated previously, the present study was intended only as a preliminary investigation, and the present writer by no means intends to imply that consensual validity or inter-interpreter reliability has been established.

In regard to the three original questions, which this investigation attempted to shed some light upon, it appears that:

1. Many and perhaps most of the significant interpretations of the subject's life style can be made from the protocol information alone. Although there is strong individual interpreter emphasis, it does not appear that the emphasis affected the final summaries significantly. Since the life style analysis procedure is categorized as an idiographic approach, individual interpreter emphasis is to be expected.
2. When the pooled "consensual" life style summary is compared to the original life style summary of the present writer, it appears that the most significant interpretations, which describe the subject's basic life style are contained in both summaries.
3. In comparing all three final life style summaries, it appears that the two contradictions in interpretation

stemming from the family constellation questionnaire and the non-consensual interpretations stemming from both the questionnaire and the early recollection material, do not affect significantly the consensual agreement of the final life style interpretations.

Based on the conclusions of the present preliminary investigation, suggestions for further research include:

1. Subjecting the individual interpretations of each interpretation category to a panel of trained judges, in an attempt to establish the reliability of the category system.
2. Expanding the standardized instructions so that each interpreter would explain, in theoretical detail how and why each interpretation was made.
3. Have each interpreter/interpret early recollections using a standardized system, such as Gushurst's (1971) method for interpretation of "pure positive" early recollections, which can be subjected to tests of reliability.

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